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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
30 July 1965

50X1

50X1

TOP SECRET

Page Denied

30 July 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

In their initial public response, both North Vietnam and the Viet Cong attempted to play down the significance of US plans to send more troops to Vietnam. Nevertheless, Vietnamese Communist propaganda on 29 and 30 July stressed the importance of bloc aid in countering US initiatives and implied that the US build-up would result in increased bloc support for the Viet Cong.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Regimental-strength ground and amphibious elements of the 21st ARVN Division have thus far killed 204 Viet Cong in a continuing large-scale search-and-destroy operation in the Mekong Delta province of Chuong Thien (Para. 1). An estimated reinforced Viet Cong battalion yesterday attacked a Regional Force training center in Kien Phong Province, and simultaneously mortared the provincial capital of Cao Lanh, inflicting heavy casualties on government defenders (Para. 2). In Phuoc Tuy Province, the US 173rd Airborne Brigade search-and-destroy operation continues, with only light enemy resistance thus far encountered (Para. 3). To the north, in coastal Quang Ngai Province, a ground sweep by a combined US Marine/ARVN force has scored favorable results (Para. 4). The press has reported an engagement early today between two Vietnamese Army battalions and a Viet Cong battalion eight miles south of Da Nang (Para. 5). South Vietnamese/US coastal surveillance activities during the period 20-27 July resulted in the destruction of 22 junks carrying guerrillas and supplies (Para. 7).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Saigon officials are ready to discuss further the offer by FULRO, a dissident tribal autonomy movement, to cooperate militarily against the Viet Cong, but Saigon is evidently unwilling to meet FULRO's request for a semiautonomous status

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(Paras. 1-2). National Police officials are reported to be devising a plan for keeping surveillance on about 1,000 potential political troublemakers alleged to be under the influence of Buddhist or Catholic leaders (Para. 3). [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] An airlift to bring rice to an isolated provincial capital in the highlands is scheduled for this week end (Para. 6).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
Nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi and the Liberation Front have responded to President Johnson's 28 July announcement about sending more troops to Vietnam by attempting to play down its significance (Para. 1). A major North Vietnamese party editorial published on 29 July stressed the importance of Communist bloc aid to counter US initiatives, but it also included a plea for better cooperation and unity in the bloc camp (Para. 2). In a 30 July broadcast, the Liberation Front made virtually an open call on the DRV to send forces to the south (Para 3).

VI. Other Major Developments: The use of Okinawa on 28 July as a base for B-52 bomber raids against the Viet Cong has provoked considerable criticism in Japan, which considers the US-administered Ryukyu Islands as its territory (Para. 1).

30 July 1965

50X1



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Regimental-strength ground and amphibious elements of the 21st ARVN Division have thus far killed 204 Communist guerrillas, captured nine weapons, and destroyed or damaged four sampans in a large-scale operation under way in Chuong Thien Province. The operation was started on 29 July to locate and destroy one unidentified Viet Cong battalion, a POW camp, a training center, and an ammo storage bunker. ARVN casualties presently stand at 19 killed and 37 wounded. In addition, two of the 40 US helicopters supporting the operation collided in mid-air causing major damage to both aircraft and injuring 14 ARVN troops. A third helicopter was hit by ground fire and the US pilot was wounded. The operation is continuing.

2. An estimated reinforced Viet Cong battalion, using mortars, recoilless rifles, and machine guns, yesterday attacked a Regional Force training center in Kien Phong Province, 75 miles southwest of Saigon. Thirty-four government defenders were killed, and 22 wounded; enemy losses are unknown. The main thrust of the Communist assault was directed against the camp, while other guerrilla bands simultaneously blew up a bridge on the road linking the post with the provincial capital of Cao Lanh and also laid a mortar barrage on the capital, killing four civilians.

3. In Phuoc Tuy Province, 28 miles southeast of Saigon, the US 173rd Airborne Brigade search-and-destroy operation continues, with only light enemy sniper fire thus far encountered. One Viet Cong has been killed and one captured; no US casualties have been sustained.

4. To the north, in coastal Quang Ngai Province, a ground sweep by a combined US Marine/ARVN force--with tactical USMC air

30 July 1965

I-1

50X1

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support--has resulted in 26 Viet Cong killed and nine captured. No friendly casualties have been incurred. The action is continuing.

5. According to late press reports, two Vietnamese Army battalions early today contacted a hard-core Viet Cong battalion eight miles south of Da Nang Air Base, killing at least 14 guerrillas. One battalion of government troops was reported to have initially made contact and a reserve battalion was dispatched to support it. The second battalion allegedly landed in the wrong area, however, allowing the enemy unit to escape intact despite repeated USAF and US Army helicopter strikes which virtually demolished three villages. ARVN casualties in the brief encounter were described as "extremely light."

6. Two USAF A-1E Skyraiders, returning from an in-country bombing mission, crash-landed last night at the coastal port of Qui Nhon, 260 miles northeast of Saigon. Only one of the pilots was injured. Elsewhere, a USN F-8 jet fighter from the carrier Bon Homme Richard crashed yesterday while on a dive bombing run in Vinh Binh Province. The pilot is presumed dead. Intense ground fire prevented a thorough search of the area.

7. Vietnamese Sea and Coastal Forces inspected 3,286 junks and 13,406 people in coastal surveillance operations conducted off South Vietnam during 20-27 July. USN forces inspected 554 wooden and steel-hulled craft. No infiltration attempts were reported; however, the commander of South Vietnam's Junk Division 22 sighted two junks, each carrying 50 men, in a free-fire zone near Qui Nhon on 23 July. [REDACTED]

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US aircraft responded after the forward air controller confirmed the location of two junks and reported 20 additional junks with net-covered crates on board in the same area. Two US destroyers participated in the attack, which resulted in the destruction of all 22 junks and in an estimated 50 Viet Cong killed.

30 July 1965

I-2

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50X1
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50X1

8. MACV's military report for 28 July shows 126 Communist - initiated incidents, 16 of which occurred during the 24-hour reporting period. No significant armed attacks or ambushes were reported. Small-scale acts of terrorism against the population, mortar and small-arms harassing fire actions against government troops, outposts, hamlets, and watchtowers; mine detonations against military and civilian convoys, and sabotage against major transportation routes continued widespread throughout the countryside.

9. Combat air operations were flown by American and Vietnamese aircraft against Viet Cong troop concentrations, rest and resupply areas, fortifications, and river shipping throughout the four corps tactical zones of South Vietnam on 28 July, with pilots reporting an estimated total of 129 guerrillas killed, 33 structures destroyed, and four sampans sunk.

30 July 1965

I-3

50X1

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Ambassador Taylor has reported a meeting with top South Vietnamese generals on 27 July at which was discussed the question of South Vietnam's response to the recent approach by FULRO, the tribal autonomy organization that has offered to cooperate militarily against the Viet Cong in return for certain concessions. GVN officials indicated that while they were prepared to continue a dialogue with FULRO representatives and try to encourage their return to the fold, they could not accept FULRO's demands for a special status. The generals also indicated some suspicion over FULRO approaches to US personnel, as well as a lack of confidence in certain tribesmen now actually serving in the government, such as the director of Montagnard affairs.

50X1

3. [redacted] National Police authorities are compiling a list of about 1,000 persons to be placed under surveillance, some of them possibly to be moved to residences in less politically sensitive areas. [redacted]

50X1

[redacted] most of those marked for surveillance, about 300 or whom would be considered "most dangerous," were persons of some political standing who are susceptible to the influence of either Buddhist or Catholic leaders, but that no monks or priests would be on the list. [redacted]

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Buddhist leader Tam Chau was aware of the plan and intended to make representations to Premier Ky against such a surveillance policy.

50X1

50X1

30 July 1965

II-1

50X1

50X1

5. According to press reports, 16 leaders of two other peace movements, which have been labeled subversive by the government although Quang Lien's movement was not, will be tried by a Vietnamese military court next Monday. Two leaders of one "subversive" peace movement were sent across the Demilitarized Zone to North Vietnam by the former Quat government.

6. The Ky government reportedly has announced that an airlift to deliver 90 tons of rice to the central highlands town of Ban Me Thuot, capital of Darlac Province, will begin on Friday. The airlift is prompted by the cutting of roads north from Saigon and west from the coast to Ban Me Thuot. A similar airlift has been carrying rice to the mountain resort town of Dalat and bringing locally produced vegetables back to Saigon.

30 July 1965

II-2

50X1

Page Denied

III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Carrier-based navy aircraft conducted three strikes in central North Vietnam on 30 July while air force strikes against targets in the northwestern part of the country were canceled because of the weather. Aircraft from the USS Independence conducted a night radar strike against the Thanh Hoa thermal power plant. Results are unknown because of darkness. This target has been repeatedly struck during the past week. Enemy reaction on the 30th consisted of heavy antiaircraft-artillery fire accompanied by the first known use of searchlights. Pilots reported seeing from 12 to 25 searchlights

50X1

2. Other aircraft from the Independence successfully attacked the Quang Suoi barracks once again. Pilots report a direct Bullpup-missile hit on the administration building, and estimate that nine buildings were destroyed while several others were damaged. At least four secondary explosions were also noted during the rocket attack on the ammunition dump at this target. USS Midway aircraft struck the Vinh army barracks; pilots estimate that seven or eight buildings were damaged.

3. A large number of armed reconnaissance missions were also flown on 30 July against a variety of targets. The most significant strike reportedly destroyed over 20 sampans near the Quang Khe port. Pilots also reported a secondary explosion on Tiger Island, where they had dumped their unexpended ordnance.

50X1

30 July 1965

III-1

50X1

Page Denied

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. Nothing of significance to report.

30 July 1965

IV-1

50X1

V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

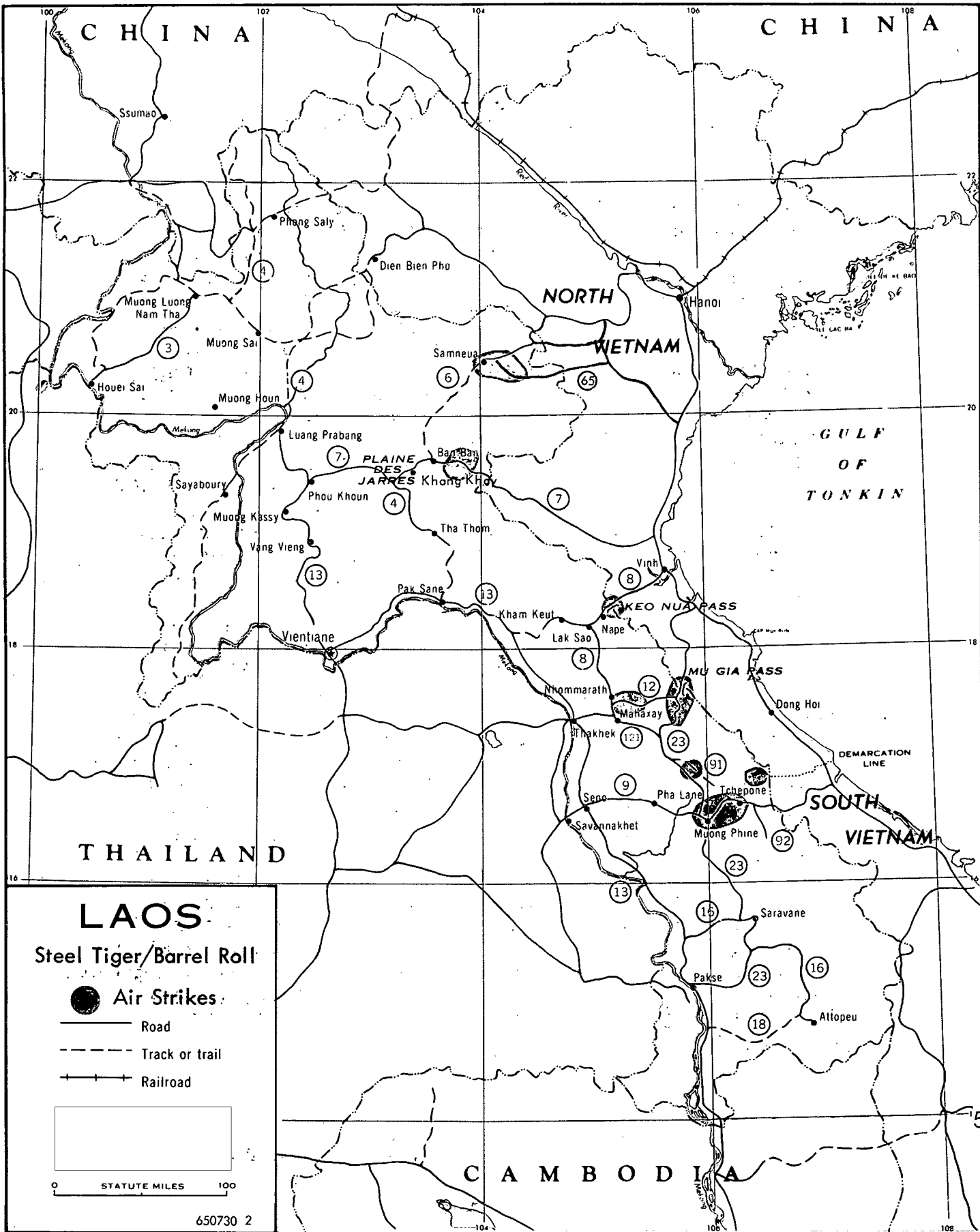
1. Hanoi and the Liberation Front responded on 29 July to President Johnson's announcement of an increase in US troop strength in South Vietnam by attempting to play down its significance. Hanoi's first radio commentary was broadcast to the people of South Vietnam and maintained that the President's proposed increase was nothing new--that it had been widely discussed in the US press for a long time. The commentary claimed that "our people have long been aware of the extremely stubborn nature of the US imperialists and are prepared to cope with any situation." It further predicted that the US would not stop with the present increase but that "when 100,000 troops are not enough, another 100,000 will be sent." The broadcast closed with Ho Chi Minh's 20 July promise to continue the fighting for 20 years or longer stating "we have enough energy and faith to implement this advice no matter what form the war takes."

2. Recent statements of US determination and resolve to prevent a Communist victory in Vietnam, however, have prompted Hanoi to discuss more openly and more frequently its efforts to obtain increased foreign assistance. Hanoi's main party daily editorial on the 29th stressed the importance of bloc assistance to counter US initiatives in Vietnam. The editorial at one point credited the bloc with "enthusiastically doing everything possible and necessary to increase the strength of our army and our people," but it also included a plea for better cooperation and unity in the aid program. "Although the Socialist camp is undeniably an invincible force," said the editorial, "the urgent task set for all of us is "to unite this force and to unify their actions in the struggle against the imperialists." The editorial pledged in return that the people of North Vietnam would "make good use of the aid of the fraternal countries."

30 July 1965

V-1

50X1



50X1

3. The Liberation Front response to President Johnson's press conference implied that the US build-up would result in increased bloc support for the Viet Cong. A spokesman for the NFLSV in a 30 July commentary called on the "North Vietnamese armed forces and people to stand closely beside" the South Vietnamese armed forces and people to destroy the US aggressors "no matter where they may be." This is the closest the Front has come to an open call on the DRV to send forces to the South. It follows other NFLSV commentary during the past few days that has sharpened the threat to bring in outside personnel. In each case, the threat has been tied to the continued US "escalation" of the war...

4. Hanoi radio reports that Ambassador Kwesi Armah, head of an official Ghanaian delegation, left Hanoi on 30 July after a four-day visit. Armah, acting as a special envoy of President Nkrumah, was reportedly cordially received by prominent DRV officials and presented a letter to Ho Chi Minh from Nkrumah. The broadcast stated that the North Vietnamese officials explained their position on the war to Armah, reiterating that the standard four-point proposal of Premier Pham Van Dong was the "soundest basis for a political settlement of the Vietnam problem." In his turn, Armah expressed satisfaction with his visit and his "cordial and useful" discussions with the Vietnamese leaders.

5. Prior to the Armah mission, the DRV President had invited Nkrumah to visit North Vietnam, requesting that he come in a personal capacity and not in connection with the Commonwealth Peace Mission of which he is a member. Armah's mission appeared designed to explore the possibility of such a visit. It is probable that Nkrumah will not make such a visit unless he feels that he could gain some positive response from the North Vietnamese on the subject of negotiations and hence enhance his own prestige.

30 July 1965

V-2

50X1

VI. OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. The use of Okinawa on 28 July as a base from which to launch B-52 bombers against the Viet Cong has provoked considerable criticism in both Japan and the US-administered Ryukyu Islands. (The B-52s used against Vietnam are based at Guam and normally fly nonstop to their target. On 28 July they deployed to Okinawa to avoid a tropical storm.) The Ryukyuan legislature has adopted a sharply critical resolution, and Japanese Government spokesmen have expressed opposition and strong misgivings. Prime Minister Sato's permissive policy toward US administration of the islands which the Japanese consider their soil will probably come under heavy fire, and Sato may have to show himself less cooperative with the US.

2. US Air Force and Navy aircraft conducted widespread armed reconnaissance and strike missions in Laos during the past week. Poor flying conditions, however, forced the cancellation of numerous flights and the total number of sorties--about 100--was down sharply from the more than 300 flown the previous week. The majority of the strikes were directed against supply and infiltration routes and associated installations.

30 July 1965

VI-1

50X1

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TOP SECRET